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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000238

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SUBJECT: EAST TIMOR SITREP FOR MAY 16, 2006

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Dili, State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

1. (SBU) SUMMARY:

- Life in Dili
- Fretilin Central committee meeting
- Guterres announces running mate
- Fretilin Congress security update
- Latest from TMR (See septel)
- Ramos-Horta on the campaign trail?
- Status of Other Embassies
- Petitioner Update
- Consular Issues

End summary.

Life in Dili

12. (U) Although life is returning to normal in Dili, the absence of large numbers of Dili's population is still apparent. The Minister of Education today reported that 40 percent of Dili's schools are still closed due the absence of both students and teachers. NGO workers describe the camps in Dili as little more than giant day care centers because many adults are returning to work or their neighborhoods during the day and only returning to the camps at night. According to CRS, the total number of IDPs nationwide has fallen to approximately 15,000 from a high of nearly 30,000. The public transportation network has returned to normal and flights out of Dili today were less than half full.

Fretilin Central Committee meeting

13. (C) Reports from observers and participants indicate that most of the debate at last weekend's Fretilin Central Committee meeting consisted of a pro-forma review of the revised party documents to be presented at the Congress. Substantive issues, such as the distribution of power within the party, were not raised and most votes were on technical or procedural issues. However, in voting on these minor issues, a bloc of about ten CCF members consistently voted for Jose Luis Guterres' positions. This represents a small proportion of the 88-member CCF but was the first overt demonstration of rumored alliance with Guterres by several CCF members, including Abel Ximenes. Both Alkatiri and Guterres' supporters have described the weekend meeting as "very successful" for their side. Alkatiri's supporters point to the strong support they received in CCF votes as indicative of their relative electoral strength. Guterres' camp points out that several CCF members told him on the margins that they had to publicly vote with Alkatiri but would support him at the Congress where the balloting will be secret.

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Guterres announces running mate

14. (SBU) Guterres announced formally that Egidio de Jesus, currently Secretary of State for Region III, would be his running mate for leadership of Fretilin. Prior to his appointment as Secretary of State for Region III, de Jesus was Secretary of State for Water and Electricity. In 1999, he

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worked in the voter education department of UNAMET until being evacuated to Australia. During the Indonesian occupation he worked for a period as Director of the Mining Department in Dili and as such gained a reputation as a dedicated and hard worker with an unblemished record. Although considered a loyal member of Fretilin, he has not been particularly politically active in the past. Egidio reportedly wants to draw the party closer to the Catholic church.

Fretilin Congress security update

15. (SBU) Police Chief Paulo Martins told the Embassy that PNTL will be responsible for ensuring the security at the Fretilin congress. Despite this, several youth groups as well as Korka and Kung Fu Masters, two martial arts group that are aligned with Fretilin, are widely rumored to coming to Dili to assist. These groups have provided security at previous events, such as the CCF meeting in May 2005, without incident.

Latest from TMR (See septel)

16. (C) General Taur Matan Ruak (TMR) told us today that that he and the FDTL are committed to cooperating with any investigation into the claims of the petitioners but that he doubts the level

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of commitment by LT Salsinha and his followers. Similarly, he said, FDTL will cooperate with any investigation into the events of April 28. The most important question to be answered, however, is why the PNTL failed rather on April 28 rather than why the FDTL was called in. When pressed, General Matan Ruak fell short of categorically denying that there were more deaths than the 5 which have been publicly acknowledged. Several times during the meeting Matan Ruak was indirectly critical of President Gusmao. In reference to the President's recent meeting with Major Reinado, for example, the General said that the government should speak with one voice and implied that the President's actions have undermined attempts to bring about a successful end to the crisis.

Ramos-Horta on the campaign trail?

17. (U) In a press release today, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided an update on Ramos-Horta's current three-day trip in the border districts. The trip has all the appearances of a campaign and may, along with other recent initiatives, be calculated to raise his domestic profile in anticipation of being asked to fill the PM position in a caretaker government should Ambassador Guterres defeat Alkatiri in the race for Fretilin Secretary General (see Dili 229). Ramos-Horta's trip activities include: greeting "hundreds of school children", addressing local communities, and handing out donations of money and clothing.

Status of Other Embassies

18. (C) The Japanese Embassy has reported that some but not all spouses have chosen to return to Japan. Otherwise Embassy is operating as usual. They have approximately 90 citizens in

country. Meanwhile, the Australian Embassy reconfirmed that there has been no drawdown of family members or non-essential staff. A 17-person security assessment team is currently in Dili to review the security status of the Australian Embassy. The Australian Ambassador and DATT report that they resisted the deployment as "overkill".

Petitioner Update

¶9. (U) In a televised interview last night, Salsinha reversed his position yet again by reiterating his demands that the government "disarm" the FDTL members who participated in the action on April 28 before he and his group will cooperate with the Government-led commission to investigate the claims of petitioners. He also announced that the petitioners will return to Gleno from their respective districts.

Consular Issues

¶10. (SBU) Embassy Dili continues to verify the contact information for Amcits and update the warden list. As of today, there are an estimated 115 Amcits currently in East Timor; the U.S. Mission has drawn down to 11. The Embassy will host a Town Hall Meeting for American citizens on Thursday, May 18 to answer questions concerning the current security situation.

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